

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Panel:

Since getting my first computer in 1986, I have been active in on-line services. I have seen my e*mail accounts go from private venues for communication, to abused boxes for unwanted information, a.k.a. Spam. The current situation is worse than the invasion of privacy that occurs on one's telephone. On a daily basis, I get 20 pieces of Spam to one or two personal message from people I know or work with.

And I dare say that it is far beyond any type of stop-gap measure to fix. In 99% of the cases, this Spam is unsolicited, meaning, I do not sign up for my address to be used for any reason other than personal commerce. For two months last year, I have followed the professional advice and opted out of any contact that I could. Many did not offer that option, and others, the opt-out link was non-working. This procedure ended up costing me an hour a day, if not more, to follow up on messages I did not want, or request to be sent to me.

The worst offenders are those who are marketing Pornography, Viagra, Mortgages, and printer ink. Most if not all the people who originated this Spam use spoofed accounts to mass mail this stuff, and from what I understand, get paid to do so. Of course the root of all this is the companies paying to market these goods and service, and should be held responsible.

Legislation currently in place is useless. Future laws and rules governing the sending of unsolicited e*mails must protect the users of the internet from this constant barage of Spam need to be enacted. These should not only protect the account owners from unwanted e*mails, but should hold accountable, both the source of the messages, and the company that markets the products.

Unlike any other "passive" media such as billboards, newspapers, and magazines, the internet e*mail box is a private service I pay to use. And as of now, that is being abused by a select few who believe that our right to privacy are non-existant as exhibited by their behavior. It is time to rein them in, and protect the rights of users on the internet. The rights of a company to freely market their goods and services end when they abuse a consumer's right and expectation of privacy.

Respectfully,

Ken Schmidt